

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

1.96

Ad6J

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
LIBRARY



1.96
BOOK NUMBER Ad6J

66304A

1.96
AddJ

THE JOB AHEAD OF EXTENSION SOIL CONSERVATIONISTS

This statement is based primarily on conference discussion of Extension Soil Conservationists at Atlanta, Georgia, October 9-11, 1946. It is not entirely limited to that discussion; neither does it encompass many details of the discussion. It does attempt to suggest the main features of the job ahead of Extension Soil Conservationists.

Educational Needs of Land Owners and Operators in Districts. A main objective of work in soil and water conservation is to bring about proper use of the land and the application of conservation practices that will safeguard and improve the land. The ultimate objective of soil conservation, of course, is to help insure this generation and future generations of Americans a sustained and satisfactory way of life.

The contribution of educational forces toward these objectives may be considered in these parts: (1) to help land owners and operators become aware of land problems; (2) to acquaint them with the orderly steps necessary to solve such problems; (3) to provide them with information that will facilitate planning, applying, maintaining, and improving the soil and water conservation measures on their farms; (4) to bring about the formation of appropriate groups for action on various soil conservation jobs; (5) to assist such groups to take all steps necessary to accomplish the group objectives; and (6) to help land owners and operators to foresee and meet problems concerning crop and livestock production and marketing arising from conservation systems of farming.

Much progress has been made in the first and second parts of this total undertaking. In the future, special emphasis should be given to the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth parts. This may be a clue to those responsible and interested as to the concentrated educational work needed in many soil conservation districts.

Soil Conservation Districts. The Extension Soil Conservationists seemed agreed (1) that the soil conservation district as a governmental subdivision of the state, controlled and operated by farmers therein, is the effective way to speed and maintain soil conservation over the long pull; (2) that the districts are founded on democratic principles that make them a most favorable means for the development of cooperative effort in soil conservation; (3) that Extension Soil Conservationists need to explore and develop better ways of working with district governing bodies to strengthen district administration and to help facilitate effective work by representatives of agencies and organizations assisting the supervisors.

These suggestions were made whereby the Extension Soil Conservationists can in the future contribute to stronger district administration: (1) encourage and assist the State Soil Conservation Committees or Boards and the State Soil Conservation Advisory Committees to fulfill their functions in advancement of the soil conservation district program within the state; (2) assist district governing bodies to determine annual and current soil conservation objectives as a basis for development with them of the educational phases of a soil conservation program; (3) provide information and other assistance to county agricultural agents and others who will work with the district governing bodies in

soil conservation education; (4) assist district governing bodies and county agents and others working with the district governing bodies to develop the needed organization and arrangements for cooperative activities in soil conservation.

Servicing Districts by Extension Soil Conservationists. It appeared from conference discussion to be the opinion (1) that Extension Soil Conservationists should not attempt directly to conduct the educational work in districts but that their efforts should be in the direction of helping county agents to take their part in the district program; (2) that correlation between the broad agricultural program and the educational phase of the district program could be improved; (3) that much improvement could be made in the clarity and adequacy of district educational plans to attain the current and ultimate desirable objectives.

A second kind of service that Extension Soil Conservationists can give to soil conservation districts is help in developing and keeping current the district program and the district work plan, bringing to each district practicable ideas as to procedures for revision and as to the workable content of such plans. There seems to be a special opportunity to help make the district work plan a vital current guide to all who participate with the governing body in the district program.

The third point of emphasis for the Extension Soil Conservationists might well be that of assisting the governing bodies to provide through plans and working arrangements for coordination of the educational efforts of agencies, organizations, and others.

Another service which the Extension Soil Conservationists will want to continue and to improve further is the arrangement for flow of informational assistance to districts. Such assistance will be given by providing publications, visual aids, news, radio material through county agents and assist other local workers in their development of local materials.

Working with Extension Specialists and Extension Administrative Personnel. Excellent progress was reported in this field. There is opportunity, however, for increased and correlated activities of extension specialists in their conservation work. Various ways of helping to bring this about were suggested. Progress has been made in increasing the support to soil conservation work by the supervisors of county agents. Further progress along this line can contribute greatly to the work in soil conservation districts.

Working with State Soil Conservation Advisory Committees. It seemed to be the consensus of the Extension Soil Conservationists that more active functioning of the State Soil Conservation Advisory Committees would be of great aid to the Extension Soil Conservationists through development of a state soil conservation program that would provide for better correlated action and that would give guidance and support to the activities of the Extension Soil Conservationists. Reports from some of the states indicated that such committees have been more or less inactive for a number of years. There seemed to be a feeling among some committees that their principal functions had been completed when advice on the

location of CCC Camps and soil conservation projects was no longer necessary. In some states, such committees are reported to have set up, several years ago, technical subcommittees that have carried on in their assigned functions even though the Advisory Committee itself has become rather inactive. Some Extension Soil Conservationists saw need for a subcommittee on education, appointed by the State Soil Conservation Advisory Committee. Some felt that a general works committee to receive all types of legitimate assignments from the State Advisory Committee was more practical than various technical committees. All of the conferees expressed a desire to work with the State Advisory Committee in order to receive advice and support and to provide the Committee with information helpful to it in the advancement of soil conservation throughout the state. The Extension Soil Conservationists believed they can appropriately bring to the attention of the Extension Director the opportunities for greater service by the State Advisory Committee.

Working with State Soil Conservation Committees (Commissions or Boards). In a considerable number of the states represented, it seems that the State Soil Conservation Committees do not attempt to advise or assist soil conservation districts after the districts are organized. Provisions of the state laws were cited and discussed which point out the opportunities for important assistance by State Soil Conservation Committees to organized districts. It was the feeling of the group that soil conservation district administration, wherever state laws permit, would be strengthened and the total soil conservation program greatly advanced if the state bodies performed their functions more fully. In most of the states these opportunities exist: (1) to provide various kinds of appropriate assistance to supervisors of soil conservation districts; (2) to keep the supervisors of districts informed of the experience of other districts and to facilitate an interchange of experience between the districts and cooperation between them; (3) to coordinate the programs of soil conservation districts so far as may be done by advice and consultation; (4) to secure the cooperation and assistance of the United States and any of its agencies, and of agencies of the state in the work of districts; (5) to disseminate information throughout the state concerning the activities and programs of the soil conservation districts. Those Extension Soil Conservationists who are receiving assignments from the State Committee find such relationships mutually helpful. They are in a position to help keep these Committees active. The Committees can help to make the Extension Soil Conservationists of greater service to districts. There is an opportunity for Extension Soil Conservationists to encourage greater activity of the Committee by pointing out important problems to individual members of the Committee.

Work with Youth. It was repeatedly emphasized that great opportunities lie ahead for working with youth to increase and improve their interest and activity in the conservation of soil and water. It is apparent that already great strides have been made in arranging for the teaching of conservation in primary and secondary schools but it is agreed that only a start has been made. The Extension Soil Conservationists seem to be in a good position to help in creating interest and bringing about arrangements for teaching of conservation in schools throughout the state.

As to soil conservation activity by 4-H Clubs, a small, rather ineffective start has been made in most of these nine states. It is a new enterprise. There is a

great need for exploration and study as to the most feasible attack. The most favorable course immediately seems to be that of working in cooperation with state leaders of 4-H Clubs and other youth organizations to (1) emphasize mass undertakings that help to make soil conservation an interest of all youth; (2) explore the field of possible activities to produce interest and experience; (3) appraise methods and materials that might be helpful.

Annual Plan of Work. The substance of discussion among Extension Soil Conservationists indicated that much improvement could be made in the way in which the Extension Soil Conservationists' annual plan of work is developed (1) as a definite and well directed guide to his own activities; and (2) as a means of bringing about understanding and cooperation on the part of others who might participate with him in carrying the plan into effect. It was pointed out that a most favorable time for getting understanding and cooperation of extension specialists and extension supervisory officials is when the annual plan of work is developed. It was also made clear to the group that the outline forwarded by the Federal Extension Service is suggestive and does not restrict the content or usefulness of their plans.

Annual Report. The Extension Soil Conservationists, for the most part, believed that their annual reports should be an accounting based on the plan of work, that the report should not unduly emphasize statistics, and that if statistics are used the narrative part should relate them to the job of Extension Soil Conservationists. It was the consensus that the Extension Soil Conservationists should give appropriate credit to various agencies contributing to conservation accomplishments that are reported and which are related to the educational work.

This statement cannot fully reflect the apparent feeling on the part of the Extension Soil Conservationists at the close of the conference that, in their position, there are many doors of opportunity open to them to speed and improve the effectiveness of the organized soil conservation movement in each of their states.



